

SIGHTSEE

Famous squares

GREENMARKET SQUARE

Shortmarket Street, www.greenmarketsquare.com
Greenmarket Square is the oldest public square in South Africa (it turns 300 in 2010) and is the most vibrant. Over the years, vegetables, slaves, jewellery, incense, souvenir T-shirts and CDs have been bought here. Back in the 1700s though, it was the place to buy one's greens, which is how it came to be called Greenmarket Square. It's obligatory for every visitor to the Cape, but because it is cafe society central, it's frequented as much by locals. Visit during the week and you'll find a mix of corporates lunching at cafes, tourists haggling down the cost of a carved wooden hippo and inner-city residents soaking it all up from their fifth floor apartments overlooking the square. One of the newest residential developments includes *Market House*, a spectacular Art Deco edifice recently restored by Rane Corporation and Theodore Yach Property Services. Theodore is chairman of the Cape Town Heritage Trust and the Central City Improvement District, and was one of the founding members of the Cape Town Partnership (whose mandate is to bring people back into the central city) so the historical square is a particularly suitable spot for his restoration project. (The penthouse and several one-bedroom units are still available – contact Theodore on theodore@typs.co.za for more info). The direct precinct includes *Vida e Caffè*, *Riboville Restaurant*, *Winesense*, *Cafe Mao* and *Long Street* so it's a good base for a cuppa, lunch, dinner or a night on the town. Whether it's an Epicurean, architectural, historical or cultural experience you're after, Greenmarket Square is where you'll find it.

GRAND PARADE

Adderley Street

The Grand Parade has been the site of some of South Africa's most significant public moments, including Nelson Mandela's public address from the City Hall balcony after his release from prison, and the Springbok rugby team presenting their 2007 World Cup trophy. Every Capetonian has a nostalgic story about the square, whether it's a die-hard rugby fan, a 60-something resident who remembers it as a pungent marketplace or a struggle hero – in some way they all claim it as their own. Though the square has fallen into



* GREENMARKET SQUARE

disrepair and has been regarded as a slummy part of town over the past few years, acting primarily as a commuter precinct and parking lot, the Grand Parade Revitalisation Process will change all that. It is an initiative of the City of Cape Town and the Cape Town Partnership and they are on track to turn the space into a cultural hub in time for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Plans include planting trees, creating a better environment for traders, making it more pedestrian friendly and erecting the first national war memorial in honour of the Cape Corps. Two of the most exciting new developments are the new public library that opened in the Drill Hall in September 2008 and the plans to turn the City Hall into a dedicated music centre. For more information, visit www.capetownpartnership.co.za.

HERITAGE SQUARE

100 Shortmarket Street. www.capeheritage.co.za

Built in the 1770s and 1780s, the cluster of buildings thrived as a commercial hub due to its prime position on one of the main thoroughfares in Cape Town and its proximity to fresh produce at *Greenmarket Square*. When the city council decided to demolish the square and build a parking lot in its place, a group of resolute Capetonians campaigned so ferociously that the square was left alone. The Cape Town Heritage Trust was formed in the process and a restoration process in the 1990s turned *Heritage Square* into the delightful hub it is today. The actual square is a dainty little enclosure which includes the *Cape Heritage Hotel*. Part of its appeal is that most of the activity is contained within four walls, away from prying eyes and city noise. However, at any time of day you'll find *Caveau Wine Bar & Deli's* streetside terrace spilling over with sophisticated urbanites. *The Headquarters* and *La Forge* cheesery are restaurants with access to the intimate courtyard. *Africa Cafe*, *Savoy Cabbage* and *Simply Asia* are also part of the block. The new owners of *Heritage Square* have turned the courtyard into a more lively and engaging space by introducing an organic market, regular art exhibitions and live jazz during summer. The hotel itself has also undergone a refurb incorporating pieces by local artists and designers Heath Nash, Richard Scott, Ruth Graves and John Angus.

CAPE QUARTER

72 Waterkant Street, Green Point

www.capequarter.co.za

In a quaint cobblestoned corner of the city between Green Point and the Bo-Kaap, the *Cape Quarter* redefined *De Waterkant* with its European ambience, trendy alfresco restaurants and upmarket retailers. *The Cape Quarter Extension*, due for completion in late 2009, will see the square carrying more clout as a business and leisure destination, especially since it is near enough to walk to both the V&A Waterfront and the CBD. Although cosmopolitan in offering, the personality of Cape Malay cottages and cobbled streets is utterly charming and 100% local. The experience transforms from a hip late-night spot with live DJs on a Friday and Saturday night, to lazy Sunday afternoon lunch at one of the four restaurants, accompanied by classical music or a marimba band. Historically, the square was a mixture of commercial and residential tenants, the privileged clientele and lower-class residents creating an interesting dynamic. Today it's more privilege than poverty, but the preserved cottages and narrow little lanes make it entirely authentic. Small businesses, leading design and architectural firms, foreign homeowners and a large gay clientele lend the area a certain energy that few other places in the city can compete with. Plus the surrounding streets are home to some of the best restaurants in town.